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ABSTRACT

Today, the division of large schools into subschools or subunits is often recommended as the answer to a number of problems in education. This paper examines the several forms of school-downsizing efforts and the somewhat diverse purposes for which they are being established. The data come from a review of literature and an evaluation of 22 schools-within-schools and small schools. The paper describes the downsizing activities in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago and identifies four distinct types, each with varying degrees of separateness and autonomy--a house plan, a mini-school, a school-within-a-school, and a small school. The impacts of downsized structures on students and schools are described. Critics, particularly Coalition of Essential Schools researchers, argue that school downsizing is costly, creates divisiveness and inequitable grouping, and contradicts effective-schools strategies. The paper concludes that reducing the size of schools can increase student participation, reduce dropout rates, enhance academic achievement, and enhance teacher efficiency. Such success depends in large part on the extent to which the small schools concept has been adopted in principle and implemented. Those units designed so as to permit them to become separate, autonomous, distinctive entities have a much better chance than those that have not been. Downsizing stimulates the move toward personalized, communal schools and may be needed to restore conditions that allow human beings to function as engaged and committed agents in their own and others' education. Finally, it appears that downsizing may be necessary so that schools can begin implementing school-improvement strategies. On the other hand, some of the problems associated with downsizing are unknown and have yet to surface. One apparent frustration is the demands that the effort makes on teachers. Two figures are included. (Contains 142 refernces.) (LMI)

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THE SUBSCHOOLS / SMALL SCHOOLS MOVEMENT -- TAKING STOCK

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December, 1995

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THE SUBSCHOOLS / SMALL SCHOOLS MOVEMENT -- TAKING STOCK

INTRODUCTION

In the 30 years that have followed the famed Barker & Gump study, *Big School, Small School* (1964), we have steadily added support for the conclusion that small schools are preferable to the large ones attended by substantial numbers of the nation's adolescents and by some younger children as well. But such a conclusion poses problems: many of the schools we have built over the last 75 years and must continue to use were designed to accommodate enrollments of 2000 - 4000 or even more. And even as we supplement or gradually replace current structures, some insist, small schools would be prohibitively expensive to build and maintain.

Nor is there much agreement as to what "small" means. New York City's new small high schools will range in size from approximately 100 to 1000 students. On the other hand, one of the small school pioneers, Central Park East Secondary School, divides its 450 students among three separate subunits to reduce operative size -- unit size -- to 150. A compilation of the size recommendations of 13 studies of the 1970s and 1980s recommended maximum school enrollments of 2000 (Public Education Association, 1992a), but many are now urging that they be capped at 1,000. (Oxley & McCabe, 1990) Yet despite the variation as to specific numbers, there is widespread agreement that the scale of many of today's schools -- especially those in urban centers and consolidated school districts -- is far too large.

Not surprisingly, therefore, new ways are being sought for pursuing the advantages of smallness by somehow downsizing or downscaling existing buildings. Thus, we are hearing of schools-within-schools and their variants, including house plans, mini-schools, learning communities, clusters, and 'charters' like those adopted in Philadelphia's high schools. Yet at the same time, some observers have warned that schools-within-schools pose problems: the most extensive examination of them to date, that of Coalition of Essential Schools ethnographers Donna Muncey and Patrick McQuillan (1991), concluded that they are divisive and likely to introduce contention.

This suggests that perhaps a somewhat modified or *partial* implementation of schools-within-schools might be the answer. The trouble with such a solution, it is

already clear, is that the more partial or compromised the implementation, the slimmer the gain and the less likely that the benefits sought will be realized. (McCabe & Oxley, 1989; McMullan, Sipe & Wolf, 1994) These benefits are contingent upon the extent to which the downsized unit becomes a point of identification and affiliation on the part of students and teachers. The challenge is shown vividly in Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot's portrait of Brookline High School. She contrasts the school's four houses with its school within a school: (1983: 184-187)

> 'They were designed to be like the houses of Harvard and Yale.'.... They resemble the houses of Harvard only in a structural, bureaucratic sense. ...[A]t Brookline they are not intellectual frameworks, neither are they communities that inspire loyalty and commitment. ... [S]tudents I talked to ... did not speak of the houses as places of connection and solace. Faculty, administrators, and students seem to agree that the houses ... serve little more than an organizational function. ..... Although counselors and homerooms are affiliated with houses and faculty have house assignments, teachers identify with the departments of which they are a part and see them as the primary educational settings. Says one housemaster ... 'Houses really have no identity .... They are a superficial overlay....'
>
> * * * * *
>
> In contrast to the houses, which are experienced as partial communities, the School Within a School emerges as a real community that embraces the lives of its inhabitants.... Tucked in a fourth-floor corner of the school, SWS has a dramatic identity .... With a twelve-year history and a very stable faculty, SWS is firmly entrenched.... [I]ts identity as a vital community, with a unique ethos and ecompassing power still prevails....

In an effort to understand what makes the difference, this paper will examine the several forms which school downsizing efforts are taking, along with the somewhat diverse purposes for which they are being established. It will also examine the benefits, liabilities, and challenges that have been linked to these various efforts.

Two kinds of inquiry undergird this largely exploratory study. One is an extensive review of the literature pertaining to house plans and schools-within-schools, as published over the last 35 years. The second major source of the claims, analyses, and speculations contained herein consists of documentations, evaluations, and policy studies of 22 schools-within-schools and small schools, that I have conducted

over the past 15 years.[1]

In launching the investigation, it must be noted at the outset that the downscaling idea is not a new one. The current variants of houses, mini-schools, schools-within-schools, have been discussed and recommended recurringly in the United States, ever since the first recorded adoption in 1919 at a Texas high school. (Plath, 1965) They have long existed elsewhere, with houses being a part of the British private school tradition and 60 - 90% of England's comprehensive high schools having adopted house plans in the 1960s and 1970s (Dierenfield, 1975; "The House System in Comprehensive Schools in England and Wales," 1968)

But houses and schools-within-schools are being recommended today in new forms, and for new reasons, and in the interests of meeting new challenges of considerable urgency. Many see them as the linchpin of restructuring. According to analyst Diana Oxley, the house plan is "a clear, obvious first step ... toward restructuring" and "a prerequisite to other educational reforms." (1989: 52 and 30) Moreover, it is "the most viable way to accomplish the radical changes that must be made." (Oxley & McCabe, 1990: v) The Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools cites the establishment of schools-within-schools as a manifestation of restructuring. (Newmann, 1991) And in Philadelphia, where The Pew Charitable Trusts have made the establishment of subunits in comprehensive high schools the focus of their efforts, the conviction is that "the strategy for pursuing fundamental restructuring within high schools... is through the creation of schools-within-a-school." (McMullan, Sipe & Wolf, 1994:3)

DOWNSIZING AS SOLUTION

Today, the division of large schools into subschools or subunits is recommended as the answer to a number of problems. The array itself is informative. The literature identifies at least nine separate purposes to which the downsizing process is currently being adopted, plus others that have operated in the past. There is the size problem, of course, which over the years has been the central impetus for the subunit proposal, but the rationale for that has varied. Most typically, ultimate purposes have pertained to better accommodating individual students and what the British have called their "pastoral needs" (Dierenfield, 1975) -- needs for attention, guidance, support. But

schools-within-schools have also been established primarily in the interests of administrative effectiveness and efficiency. In fact, the establishment of subunits within schools has at various times been undertaken in the interests of better administrative coordination and control (Hodgson, 1958; Prasch & Wampler, 1959), better disciplinary control (Plath, 1965), decreased vandalism, crime and delinquency rates (Garbarino, 1978; Gottfredson, 1985), curriculum reorganization (Bowden, 1971; Oxley & McCabe, 1990), school governance change (Lewis, 1981; Oxley, 1994), teacher teaming (Bowden, 1971), and better advisement. (Siskin, 1994) They have also been adopted in the interests of accommodating particular populations, ranging all the way from the most at risk students (e.g., Kadel, 1994) to the most academically talented and accomplished (e.g., Lund, Smith, Glennon, 1983).

Understandably, particular arrangements have varied in accord with the purposes being sought. But even where purposes are shared, organizational arrangements have differed. Most typically, subunits have been argued in the interests of making schools more responsive to individual students. (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1954; Ramsey, Henson & Hula, 1967; McLaughlin, Talbert, Kahne & Powell, 1990; Oxley, 1994) Today, the case for rendering schools more responsive has been considerably augmented since the downsizing recommendation launched in 1964 by the Barker and Gump study. Several of the most influential school studies of the 1980s elaborated it, recommending the creation of small schools or the downsizing of large ones. (Goodlad, 1984; Sizer, 1984; Boyer; 1983; Lipsitz, 1984). Substantial subsequent inquiry has verified the advantages.

We know that students are more satisfied (Lindsay, 1982; Burke, 1987), more academically productive (Lee & Smith, 1993; Lee & Smith, 1994; Lee, Smith & Croninger, 1995), more likely to participate in school activities (Barker & Gump, 1964; Lindsay, 1982), better behaved (Gottfredson, 1985), and less likely to drop out (Pittman & Haughwout, 1987) in small schools than in large ones. We also know that the benefits of small schools are particularly pronounced with disadvantaged youngsters deemed to be at risk with respect to graduation. (Lee & Bryk, 1989; Lee & Smith, 1993; Lee & Smith, 1994) Small schools thus appear particularly important for disadvantaged or marginal students. (Oxley, 1989; Stockard & Mayberry, 1985; Lee &

Smith, 1994; Lee, Smith & Croninger, 1995) This means that smallness is strongly indicated for urban students, large percentages of whom fall into the at risk category by virtue of one characteristic or another -- including family income, minority status, parents' education level (Levin, 1985; Wehlage, Rutter & Turnbaugh, 1987) or the student's previous education history. (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack & Rock, 1986; Hahn, 1987) Demographic trends indicate that for the foreseeable future, increasing percentages of students in other sorts of locales, beyond the cities, will share these traits as well -- suggesting that the small schools feature may become an increasingly relevant and attractive organizational option.

But if the case for small schools has been argued and substantiated, it is also clear that decades of commitment to the comprehensive high school and to school district consolidation have led us away from small buildings. It would be possible to feature smaller school designs in the future, and efforts have been undertaken to stimulate such a move. (Architectural League, Public Education Association, & Princeton Architectural Press, 1992; Public Education Association, 1992) Urban space demands will continue, however, to provide pressure for buildings accommodating larger numbers; and in any event, the problem remains of what to do with the present supply of large school buildings if smaller is better. It is the resulting need to adapt the facilities we now have to the circumstances recommended -- small schools -- that has fed the move to creating subunits. A separate major reason, then, for the current interest in downsizing is as a way of 'making do' with the physical facilities we have. Even existing large buildings, it is urged, can be adapted or renovated to accommodate multiple small units, often with minimal physical alteration. (Public Education Association, 1992a) Such a move makes it possible to reduce the *experienced* size of school, despite building size.

The division of large schools into subunits -- or rather, the replacement of a large school with what are in effect subschools -- has also been recommended for a somewhat different reason: as an answer to the question of what to do with failing schools. Urban areas in particular are plagued with schools that over an extended period consistently fail to perform adequately: student achievement levels remain low, attendance poor, graduation rates abysmal. New York State identifies the worst of such schools on a roster titled "Schools Under Registration Review." The State's list

currently contains 80 entries (Sengupta, 1995), many of which have been on it for a period of years. Efforts to improve the educational experiences of students in such schools have often met with failure. (Grannis, 1992; Lipmann, 1995) Even well-devised plans for restructuring them have fallen short of the transformations needed. (Wehlage, Smith & Lipman, 1992) Nor have the direst measures consistently proved effective: for instance, the closing of a school for redesign (Raywid, 1996) or even the taking over of an entire district. (MacFarquhar, 1995)

The possibility that replacing a failing school with multiple new, small, separate, autonomous units may be the best solution is currently under investigation in New York City, where a plan is under way to close down failing schools altogether by phasing them out -- and subsequently replacing them by moving in a set of separate, small schools. The first building to be so constituted is Julia Richman High School in Manhattan which currently contains four separate high schools and eventually will add an infant-toddler day care center, a professional development institute, a transitional college program, and medical services. (Ancess, 1995b) New York's Center for Collaborative Education -- the New York City arm of the Coalition of Essential Schools -- argues that this is the best solution to the challenge of what to do with ailing schools. (Ancess, 1995b)

Relatedly, the Center for Collaborative Education maintains that the creation of small, autonomous schools may represent the model for how to go about school restructuring. (Center for Collaborative Education, 1992) In other words, the small schools idea has value as process, as well as value as product. The American Federation of Teachers suggested several years ago that small schools might stand as the model for reform. (Shanker, 1988b) The Center goes farther, in suggesting that the very process of creating them may also model the ideal process for bringing about educational change. This reason for launching subunits, or small units, within a school is probably not a prevalent one today, and most schools and districts that create such units do so for other purposes. This one, however, may become increasingly prominent, as observers of school restructuring efforts reach the conclusion that restructuring a school is almost impossible: starting over holds far more promise. (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Newmann, 1995; Wehlage & Smith, 1992)

The resort to subunits or multiple independent units within school buildings is

also happening in an effort to achieve a number of the more specific purposes marking today's school reform agenda. Some look to schools-within-schools or house plans as the means to personalizing education. (Oxley & McCabe, 1989) Reformer Ted Sizer is just one of those emphasizing the necessity of teachers knowing students well in order to be able to help them learn and grow. (1984) Personalization has become a prominent reform and restructuring theme for others as well. (e.g., McLaughlin, Talbert, Kahne & Powell, 1990) and many have pointed out that downsized subunits like schools-within-schools or house plans are a good means of achieving it.

The same is true of another current reform theme, that emphasizing the importance of diffused roles for teachers. Such role expansion has been argued as a needed antidote to bureaucracy's fragmentation and the ensuing anonymity imposed on students, with the alienation which that in turn can bring. (Newmann, 1981) Others have argued that the narrow roles have comparably negative effects on staff -- resulting in estrangement or minimal commitment as well as in a general deskilling of teachers. (Apple, 1987) Small schools do not have such problems because they lack the enrollment to support specialized roles and functions. Thus their teachers are typically expected to assume multiple roles in relation to students (e.g., advisor, advocate, home liaison), as well as in relation to the school (performing functions assumed in comprehensive high schools by deans, supervisors, librarians, curriculum and staff developers). The broadened responsibilities, it is argued, elicit stronger affiliation, effort, and commitment on the part of both students and teachers. (Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1993)

By virtue of the special advantages of small schools for at risk students, a number of initiatives have adopted house plans or schools-within-schools as a means of dropout prevention, and of helping previously marginal students to successfully complete school. (Wehlage, Smith & Lipman, 1992; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko & Fernandez, 1989) Such a purpose has been central in the creation of house plans and schools-within-schools or their equivalents in a number of urban schools. (Oxley, 1990; Stone, 1989; Fine, 1994)

Others, concerned about the inequities of tracking, have looked to the establishment of subschools as a way to detrack. (Fine, 1994) Some have proposed

that by offering themes and an interdisciplinary curriculum, interest-based grouping becomes possible in preference to tracks based on presumed ability levels. (Oxley, 1994) Students can then be grouped by their own choice. This has been undertaken particularly at the middle school level where schools-within-schools are a frequent organizational feature. (Burke, 1987) It is held that by altering approaches to curriculum and instruction, heterogeneous grouping could be made more acceptable and more viable.

Finally, some have adopted small units as a means of achieving a different sort of contemporary reform theme, that of teacher empowerment. (Meier, 1995) As teachers in small schools take on the diffuse roles and diverse functions noted above -- i.e., as they design instructional programs, and participate in elaborating a school theme, designing the schedule, setting disciplinary policy -- they are in fact exercising the prerogatives associated with teacher empowerment. The context is one of assuming responsibility and getting the job done, rather than of exercising rights and privileges, but the result is that of teacher empowerment. This has been one of the explanations offered for the success of East Harlem's Community School District 4: that the small schools which teachers were invited to create and establish resulted in an extraordinary empowering of those teachers involved, casting them in novel and rewarding roles. (Meier, 1995) It is not surprising, then, that some have turned to such an arrangement as an effective means of empowering teachers.

Thus, there are a variety of reasons for which school people have created subschools, and a variety of purposes they are seeking to realize through this kind of structure: downsizing large schools, meeting the needs of at risk students, solving the problem of what to do with failing schools, modeling the process of school restructuring, personalizing education for all students, extending teacher roles, dropout prevention, an equitable substitute for tracking, and teacher empowerment.

Growing evidence of the superiority of a 'communal' organizational form for schools, in preference to a bureaucratic one, may well prove a substantial additional stimulus to the establishment of subunits and small schools. Investigators have found that in schools rejecting a bureaucratic form of organization in favor of a 'communal' or 'organic' one, achievement gains are not only enhanced but more equitably distributed, resulting from proportionately even greater gains on the part of

disadvantaged students. (Lee & Smith, 1994) The finding that school restructuring of this sort is clearly linked to greater learning -- and that the results observed also "provide solid support for the movement toward smaller learning environments" (Lee & Smith, 1994: 25) -- suggest that interest in schools-within-schools and small schools may grow. A recent investigation into which restructuring features had the strongest effects on student achievement and its distribution concluded this way:

> What might 'good' high schools look like? A change that has strong support in our research is a move to smaller high schools. Without new bricks, mortar, bond issues, or millage increases, the most reasonable way to accomplish this would be to create schools within schools -- smaller organizational units within the existing walls of most large high schools. (Lee, Smith & Croninger, 1995: 29)

DOWNSIZING EFFORTS IN THREE CITIES

New York

In New York, a policy adopted in 1987 mandated house plans for 9th-graders in all comprehensive high schools. Although implementation was slow, some schools soon made plans for extending the mandated one-year arrangement to cover all grades and continue throughout students' years within the high school. (McCabe & Oxley, 1989) The move toward house plans continued for several years, with varying degrees of implementation and attendant success. (Oxley & McCabe, 1990) It has never been rescinded, but accompanying policy support has evidently never been sufficient (McCabe & Oxley, 1989) and appears to have waned with subsequent school administrations. Unfortunately for the plan, the Director of the High School Division who initiated it was gone before implementation began.

But the downsizing idea received a considerable boost in 1992, when then-Chancellor Joseph Fernandez launched a small schools initiative consisting of plans that would yield almost 50 small new high schools. The plan was devised in collaboration with the Center for Collaborative Education and the Fund for New York City Public Education. (The Center for Collaborative Education is the network of alternative school directors originally launched by Deborah Meier, which, as previously noted, has subsequently become the New York City arm of the Coalition of Essential Schools. The Fund for New York City Public Education is a philanthropic

organization "which channels money into the school system from foundations and private contributors.") (Berger, 1992)

The Center for Collaborative Education was to sponsor and help create 12 new schools sharing the general orientation of the Coalition of Essential Schools. According to the plan, the 12 would eventually collectively take over the buildings housing two failing comprehensive high schools -- hence the name "campus schools" was coined. The Fund for New York City Public Education was to sponsor another set of new, "New Visions" schools, marked by varying orientations and persuasions. Yet an additional group of small schools was to be developed under the auspices of the City's Division of High Schools.

The first of these schools, 32 of them, opened in September of 1993. They differed considerably from one another, but all were small, they tended to be organized thematically, and reportedly all were moving toward cooperative governance and management. (Office of Educational Research, 1994) As of June 1995, the total of the new schools had reached 48. ("Smaller, Better Schools", 1995) The plans of the initial three sponsors have since been augmented by an Annenberg matching grant of $25 million announced in 1994. This calls for the establishment of an additional 50 small schools, this time with four different sets of sponsors: the Center for Collaborative Education; the Fund for New York City Public Education; the Manhattan Institute's Center for Educational Innovation, whose staff consists primarily of administrators formerly associated with East Harlem's innovative Community School District 4; and the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), which is an advocacy group specializing in improving the circumstances of lower income neighborhoods. (Celis, 1994) The venture as a whole is concerned not just with the creation of small schools but also with the systemic reform necessary to their sustenance. Plans call for the establishment of new, non-governmental arrangements for clustering schools -- through networks and learning zones -- for purposes of creating professional and other extra-governmental coordination and accountability mechanisms. However, New York has seen several chancellors (superintendents) since the small schools initiative was launched in 1992. The successor of the sponsoring chancellor was supportive of the idea, though perhaps reflected somewhat less confidence in it than had its originator. The successor of the

second chancellor may espouse a conception of system-level reform incompatible with networks and learning zones, but that remains to be seen.

Philadelphia

Downsizing efforts also began in Philadelphia in the late 1980s with a large grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts "for a massive overhaul of the curriculum and organization of city high schools." (Walton, 1991) The grant established "The Philadelphia Schools Collaborative," an independent organization, designed by the district and the teachers union to assist in the systemic reform or restructuring of secondary education. The Collaborative seeks nothing less than to transform "all elements of the educational process, including instruction, administration, and curriculum." (McMullan, Sipe & Wolf, 1994: 1) It was to do so by overseeing the creation within Philadelphia's 22 comprehensive high schools, of schools-within-schools, or "charters." (McMullan, Sipe & Wolf, 1994)

Michelle Fine defines the term *charters*, as used in Philadelphia, to designate a particular type of 'small school' with specific criteria for size, heterogeneity, and teacher-based decisionmaking. The term's choice was influenced by Albert Shanker's urging of it (1988a) and the American Federation of Teachers' endorsement of both concept and label. (Shanker, 1988b) The goal of the venture is to improve student performance via changing both pedagogy and school organization. This was to be accomplished with the introduction of the components that enable restructuring -- decisionmaking and governance arrangements, partnerships, etc. (McMullan & Wolf, 1991), as adopted by school-based teams.

According to recent figures 110 such charters have been created within the 22 large high schools, and 61% of Philadelphia's high school population is enrolled in charter programs. As was the case with New York's house plans, however, the extent of the implementation varies considerably from one charter to another. Some are extensively developed programs reflecting a great deal of separateness, autonomy, and distinctiveness. They have their own students, teachers, programs, and identities. Other charters, however, seem to exist largely in name only -- i.e., they represent only partial assignments for their teachers, there is little by way of theme or special program, and their students, although officially part of a charter, take few of their

courses within it. (McMullan, Sipe & Wolf, 1994)

Philadelphia has encountered the problems of massive change efforts and met with resistance from multiple sources. From the outset, top school officials were involved and were party to the creation of the Collaborative which was to run the effort. The superintendent formally set the expectation that eventually all of the city's comprehensive high schools would be converted to charters, even though it was left to grass-roots groups of teacher volunteers to begin implementation of the venture. However, what the superintendent would not do was to impose the decision of setting aside some schools to consist entirely of charters. This made school-level resistance hard to overcome, and union objections to charters have been intense and continuing, with an insistence on job protections and transfer rights based on seniority. (Schwartz, 1994) Furthermore, as the initial evaluation of the effort noted (McMullan & Wolf, 1991), the Collaborative could not manage to generate an environment supportive of the changes at district headquarters. Thus those systemic reform hopes which addressed district-level change have not borne fruit. As evaluators summed it up, the Collaborative was "by and large, unsuccessful in convincing particular administrative departments to modify or re-think policies, procedures and expectations in support of restructuring." (McMullan & Wolf, 1991: x)

Seven years after the effort began, a new superintendent reconfirmed the commitment, enthusiastically endorsed the downsizing idea, and in effect moved to have the district assume leadership of it, replacing the Collaborative -- to assure top level support in seeing that the system is radically decentralized and that teachers have a strong voice in local school councils established in the downsized schools. But the superintendent's is apparently a standards-driven, systemic change vision of restructuring (Smith & O'Day, 1991), and some fear that even though vigorous leadership may increase currently lagging momentum, it could also transform and bureaucratize the effort, skewing its bottom-up reform thrust. (Klonsky, 1995b)

Chicago

Chicago is a city where downsizing sentiment flourished and small schools were being launched, even prior to the adoption of a formal district policy of support. Lists suggest that as of 1995 there were perhaps 30-40 subunits and subschools in

Chicago -- with several high schools having one or two, several consisting entirely of multiple subschools, and one elementary school as well that had been divided into eight academies. One high school was divided by the city's new Board of Trustees into four subschools, after they had listed it as a school needing remediation. Former superintendent Argie Johnson had earlier gone so far as to convene a Small Schools Task Force empowered "to explore the systemic obstacles that Chicago's small schools have encountered and to develop recommendations about how the ... [district and board] ... could more effectively support and encourage the growth of small schools." (Azcoitia, 1995)

The Task Force report in June, 1995, strongly recommended a supportive districtwide policy, the establishment of a Small Schools Office, and the launching of a small schools initiative. Shortly before the Task Force report was due, Mayor Daley issued his own endorsement and call for small schools. (Spielman, 1995) Just before school opening in the Fall, the newly named Board of Trustees adopted a resolution espousing small schools and establishing "a 'user-friendly' means of encouraging and fostering ... [them] ... and of assuring ... [them] ... support ... throughout the administrative structure." (Chicago School Reform Board of Trustees, August 29, 1995)

But well prior to such official support, a number of Chicago organizations had joined in the reform effort there, and it is such groups that have provided much of the stimulus for the development of small schools. A 1994 paper describing and recommending such schools was sponsored by 13 organizations, including the Chicago Urban League, the Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, Designs for Change, the Quest Center of the Chicago Teachers Union, the Chicago Panel on School Policy, and the Small Schools Workshop at the University of Illinois-Chicago. (Alternative Schools Network et al., 1994) The last-named, U of I group has been supported by the MacArthur and Joyce Foundations and has both extended help and encouragement to prospective small schools, and tried to broaden the support for such efforts. A $47 million Annenberg grant to Chicago is providing further impetus, with 100 small Challenge Schools promised. And a recently formed coalition is seeking to marshall a "movement" that will yield widespread support for small schools.

But until quite recently, progress in Chicago had occurred in the absence of any formal district approval or support. Thus the ability to establish subunits had been largely dependent upon the willingness of a principal -- and a Local School Council -- to let it happen (although there have been several that have managed to get started without it, and one consisting of teachers who were driven out of their home schools and ultimately managed to find space elsewhere). While some of the schools-within-schools that have resulted have worked out "comfortable" arrangements with their host schools, "the limited independence most schools-within-schools have attained frequently constrains their ability to create the learning environment they seek." (Azcoitia, 1995: 3) To the extent that the new Board of Trustees can make its wishes felt, such constraints should be lifting.

Contrasting Policy Environments

Among our three examples, one might anticipate fairly different policy environments: In New York there is official support for the launching, by volunteers, of new, small schools. There is also interest and financial support from the philanthropic community. The new schools have encountered difficulties with middle level bureaucrats -- particularly in being able to meet in sufficient time their several needs for space, materials, teacher and student assignments. (Darling-Hammond, Ancess, McGregor & Zuckerman, 1995) And it has occasionally seemed to some that the High School Division was more interested in replicating large schools on a smaller scale than in educational transformation. There have also been conflicts to deal with at various levels. (Dillon, 1995) But at least at top levels -- superintendent and board -- there has been sincere, often enthusiastic support, even when budget woes have restricted resource commitment.

Philadelphia is a different story, despite the district's official and explicit commitment to charters -- more recently re-named "learning communities" -- as the mechanism of systemic reform. The city has mandated that all of its comprehensive high schools be converted to charters. In form, it is a topdown mandate calling for bottom-up reform. Prior to the policy's adoption in 1988 there were 30 existing "charter-like" programs, including magnet schools and career academies. As of Fall, 1993, 80 subschools or -units had been launched over a five-year period. Partly in

consequence of haste, at some schools there was insufficient opportunity to let staff self-select, or design and mount programs, or there was not enough time to let students to choose their charter. And it seems safe to conclude that not all of the participants have been willing volunteers -- and not all of those charged with administering the transition have been anxious to have it happen. Thus, it is not surprising that, as one observer commented about the governance changes, "the path ... has been layered with ambivalence by the union, the district, and the high schools themselves." (Zane, 1994: 132)

It would appear, then, that the stronger and more assertive policy support for downsizing in Philadelphia may have roused more opposition -- and more concerted and effective opposition -- than has been the case in New York. This seems to have been the case not just with people in the high schools, but with teachers unions as well. In New York, the teachers union has taken quite a reform-oriented position in its willingness to exempt the new small schools, at least initially, from automatic teacher assignment processes. (Darling-Hammond, Ancess, McGregor & Zuckerman, 1995) In Philadelphia, the teachers union has been less sanguine about having personnel decisions made at the school level, and indeed has been identified as "the most vocal critic of charters." (Klonsky, 1995b: 9)

Chicago is a different story. There, a small schools "movement" appears to be still in the making. Policy advocates have stimulated considerable interest and positive disposition on the part of a large number of the civic, institutional, and philanthropic groups active in school reform, and on the part of school people. This finally culminated in a formal policy of support and encouragement for 'small schools.' The care with which widespread support has been stimulated, and the time spent on cultivating it, may eventually produce the most positive policy environment of the three cities. Meanwhile, however, the growth of small schools there has been the slowest of the three.

SUBSCHOOL TYPES AND UNITS

The terms "subunits" and "subschools" have been used here to subsume the various sorts of downsizing arrangements now proliferating. The nomenclature is

awkward -- and significant -- because the structures range in nature all the way from tentative, semi-units organizationally supplementing a high school's departments, to totally separate schools which just happen to be located under the same roof. The former represent minimal additions to and departures from conventional comprehensive high school organizational arrangements; the latter, total organizational restructuring. In theory, at least, the several plans for downscaling seem to differ largely along a continuum, with house plans representing the least departure from conventional organizational structure, and separate small schools the most.

It must be noted, however, that there can be great variation within any single type, almost spanning the entire gamut -- so that some house plan implementations represent few noticeable departures from conventional organization, while other schools' implementation of the same plan may approach a full-scale, independent school-within-a-school. (Oxley & McCabe, 1990) It must also be noted that the terminology distinguishing one type from another, as well as the practice, is highly idiosyncratic: for example, New York's distinction between mini-schools and schools-within-schools has probably not been formalized elsewhere -- or, if so, may elsewhere be identified in other terms. Philadelphia's "charter schools" are defined as schools-within-schools. (McMullan & Wolf, 1991) Yet some of them look like rather weakly implemented house plans (McMullan, Sipe & Wolf, 1994), while others appear as virtually autonomous subschools. (Oxley, 1994)

In addition, and further confusing the identification of subunit types, some are identified primarily in programmatic terms, rather than in the organizationally-oriented terms that identify "mini schools" and "schools- within-schools." For instance, New York's alternative schools are virtually all quite literally schools-within-schools, since all but a very few are housed in large buildings with other schools, and in terms of their independence they are separate small schools. At least at the high school level, however, they are not identified as schools-within-schools, or small schools, but as alternatives. In New York, alternatives are defined formally in terms of a target group (students who have experienced prior difficulty in school, according to Phillips, 1992), but more frequently in terms of their innovative practice involving non-traditional curricular presentation and instructional methods. And in California, the Partnership

Academies which represent a somewhat different and fairly specific programmatic thrust, are sometimes equated with schools-within-schools since all of them are housed within larger school buildings. (Dayton et al., 1987)

To further confuse matters, some schools have sought to accomplish purposes similar to those which yield house plans and schools-within-schools, by changing teacher assignments while leaving organizational structure intact. This seems to be the case with teacher teaming arrangements, some of which pose questions quite similar to those addressed to downsizing structures. (See, e.g., Kruse & Louis, 1995.) Various sorts of teacher teaming set-ups have resulted, including at least one which manages to span both structural and programmatic orientations with the designation "Team-within-a-school" (Aschbacher, 1991). It is a curricular program titled Humanitas, conducted by a teacher team. But it seems to have some of the same features that mark house plans.

To illustrate the situation, here are three conceptions of subunits and small schools. The Chicago Task Force characterized *small schools* this way: (1) They are small -- preferably with enrollment limits of 300 for an elementary school and 500 for a high school. (2) They consist of like-minded teachers and families -- "cohesive, self-selected faculties ...[who] ... share an educational philosophy" and families which choose this orientation. (3) They are sufficiently autonomous to control key curricular, budgetary, personnel, organizational, and student decisions. (4) They have an agreed-upon focus or theme. (5) Students choose to enroll, and the schools are inclusive rather than selective, including diverse groups and ability/achievement levels. (6) They are effective in preparing and graduating students, aided by a "personalized learning environment and flexibility." (Azcoitia, 1995: 9)

Philadelphia's *charters*, according to Michelle Fine who was instrumental in conceptualizing them, are schools-within-schools, with "quite specific criteria:" (1994: 5)

> Anywhere from 200 to 400 students constitute a charter, with 10 to 12 core teachers who work together from ninth (or tenth) grade through to graduation. The charter faculty enjoy a common preparation period daily, share responsibility for a cohort of students, and invent curriculum, pedagogies, and assessment strategies that reflect a common intellectual project. Students travel together to classes... With teachers, counselors, and parents, they constitute a semiautonomous community within a building of

charters.... [T]he student body must be, by definition, heterogeneous.

A third version, the conception of *houses* presented by the Public Education Association in New York (Oxley & McCabe, 1990: 9), defined a fully implemented house plan to consist of cross-grade, heterogeneously grouped subunits, staffed by cross-disciplinary teacher teams, each of which develops its own coordinated curriculum (in sessions regularly scheduled to permit this). Each house also has its own support staff, its own space, and its own extra-curricular activities. Houses also have their own operating budgets and are managed by their own staff.

The three conceptions make several things clear. First, despite the fact that the three are talking about presumably different phenomena -- houses, charters, small schools -- there are obviously some real connections. A similar vision with respect to school organization, size, personalization, teacher roles, student grouping, decentralized school governance seems to inspire the three.

On the other hand, the three are also diverse and reflect different emphases as to core traits. For instance, of the three, only Fine's charter conception suggests anything about what the rest of the building must be (totally comprised of charters), and only the Public Education Association builds extra-curricular activities into a definition of a house. Of the three, only Chicago's Task Force mentions that each small school must have a focus. The differences are not as pronounced as may appear, however, because both the Public Education Association and the charter school authors supplement their defining characteristics with a number of other traits. For instance, student choice of house or charter is presupposed by both conceptions and stated elsewhere, even though not mentioned in their definitional statements as the Chicago Task Force does.

It can also be noted that all three statements fall into what Israel Scheffler (1978) called *programmatic* definitions: They are not value-neutral or primarily empirically-oriented descriptions of how houses or small schools do operate, but how they should operate. The reason such definitions are so widely used in education, as Scheffler noted them to be, appear political: In New York, for example, once the house plan had been mandated and its possibilities for school transformation noted by the Public Education Association as an advocacy group (McCabe & Oxley, 1989), it made sense to conceptualize the budding arrangement in ways that might take it

farthest and make it work best. Thus, each of the three conceptions outlined above assembles what each set of authors feels to be the traits central to success, and collectively these comprise the definition. As a result, we cannot take any of the three as reflecting what houses, charters, or small schools actually look like, but what the authors feel they *ought* to look like. Public Education Association authors Oxley and McCabe report (1990) they could find not a single school for their study of the house arrangement in New York which had all of the key features they identify as central to it.

Since the three definitional statements cited are fairly representative of others -- albeit somewhat more careful and detailed -- they illustrate the absence of standard terminology. In these statements, for instance, houses and small schools appear almost interchangeable: equally ambitious and extensive efforts with respect to what they include and the amount of autonomy they enjoy. Yet there are vast differences from one to another of members of each genre. Some within the genre look nothing like others (McMullan, Sipe & Wolf, 1994), while some within one genre show stronger kinship with members of the other. (Oxley, 1993) And some appear vastly successful (Oxley, 1994) while others fail. (Raywid, 1996)

When viewed in full context, it is also apparent that some of these conceptions are far more comprehensive than others. Of the three, the Chicago Task Force version is the leanest, limiting their conception to central organizational features. The Public Education Association conception on the other hand, expands not only to include school program concerns, but to recommend particular features for curriculum (cross-disciplinary) and instruction (cohesive, coordinated). The result is a full proposal for school transformation, reflecting an array of the pedagogical ideas reformers are currently urging, but all mentioned as features of a house plan.

Despite the case that can be made for each of these programmatic elements, it may enable downsizing arrangements to better serve multiple schools and audiences to separate the organizational features as much as possible from the particulars of the programmatic. After all, there could certainly be houses, schools-within-schools, and small schools that are quite traditional with respect to their program and practice. When one focuses on organizational features, the most important practical differences among downsizing arrangements involve matters determining their separateness, autonomy, and distinctiveness. These are not the *only* important issues but they

appear closely linked to, and perhaps generative of, other conditions that are pivotal. For instance, we know that the existence of a strong, closely knit professional community among teachers is a major contributant to school success. It is here assumed that it is in the course of acting collectively on their autonomy, and seeking to define and sustain the school's distinctiveness, that professional community will be forged. On the other hand, however, the status of the new subunit is likely to determine the nature of the interactions that create the professional community. Are teachers collectively responsible for the school and its students? Is the larger school (if there is one) the *host* school, or is it the *parent* school? The latter is likely to resolve the questions of separateness, autonomy, distinctiveness in rather minimal terms. The 'parent' orientation is more consistent with house plans and mini-schools; the 'host' orientation with schools-within-schools and small autonomous schools.

Although it is questionable whether the problems as to terminology can finally be resolved, the subunits established over the years reflect some important practical differences as to the scope and ambitiousness of the downsizing efforts undertaken and the autonomy ceded such units. Based on this experience, four distinct types can be identified.

A **house plan** is an organizational arrangement not affecting program (curriculum and instruction) but only who provides it. Both students and teachers are assigned to houses, and students take some to all of their coursework with their 'housemates' and from the teachers assigned to the house. A house may be organized on a one-year or on a vertical, multi-year basis. The house plan is a matter of internal organization which is typically overlaid upon the departmentalized structure characterizing most high schools. Houses may have separate extra-curricular activities but they ordinarily share in the extra-curricular program of the larger school.

A **mini-school** goes beyond a house plan in addressing curriculum and instruction, and it usually seeks to maintain a program different from that of the larger school, or of its co-schools if there are several in a single building. Accordingly, it may also have more separateness and autonomy than does a house. It has its own students and teachers and is usually vertically organized. A mini-school has no separate status or authorization, however, and is dependent upon the school principal for its existence, budget, and staff. Teacher affiliation may be by choice or assignment

or some mix of the two. Student affiliation is usually by choice.

A **school-within-a-school** is a separate and autonomous unit formally authorized by the board of education and/or the superintendent. It plans and runs its own program, has its own staff and students, and receives its own separate budget. Although it must negotiate the use of common space (gym, auditorium, playground) with a host school, and defer to the building principal on matters of safety and building operation, the school-within-a-school reports to a district official instead of being responsible to the building principal. Both its teachers and students are affiliated with the school-within-a-school as a matter of choice. At the extreme, these programs might more appropriately be called schools-within-buildings, as Debbie Meier has suggested, than schools-within-schools, since there may be no more connection to the other programs within the building than is the case with the multiple businesses and other enterprises that may rent office space within the same building. They are sets of schools housed in "multi-school sites." (Public Education Association, 1992b)

As noted, this is schools-within-schools at the extreme. However, there is a question about how frequently schools-within-schools can and do operate "at the extreme." According to some, this is likely only if a building holds more than one school-within-a-school -- or consists entirely of schools-within-schools. (Fine, 1994) It may be that only a school-within-a-school shaped elsewhere and then simply assigned space within a given building is likely to achieve such distance and autonomy. Put in different terms, it may be that the creation of an autonomous school-within -a-school through a *restructuring* process is far more difficult than is its creation anew -- as a newly-minted small school assigned available space. Otherwise, a school-within-a-school is a challenge to old relationships and interaction patterns, and such cultural change comes hard.

The struggles of some schools-within-schools in claiming the autonomy that has formally been ceded them (Raywid, 1996) suggests that it may be important to identify a fourth ideal type, differing from a school-within-a-school only in that it begins life in a building new to its staff -- a new school-within-a-school assigned to a building other than that to which some or all of its teachers were previously assigned. Thus, a **small school**, or a **school-within-a-building**, is a school-within-a-school that as a new entity, with its own personnel, organization, and instructional program, has been

assigned to a building which is new to its staff.

It must be underscored that this terminology and these distinctions do not represent common usage. As previously suggested, there is no common usage. Sometimes the terms are otherwise defined and sometimes they are used interchangeably -- as in "under a SWAS arrangement [schools] will divide the student body in a number of semi-autonomous units (or houses, or mini-schools..." (Burke, 1987) or "a mini school-within-a-school." (D'Amico & Adelman, 1986:13) By no means all of the works cited in this inquiry employ the usage proposed here or mark these differences. Thus these four types draw distinctions I suspect to be of practical importance in designing arrangements, rather than embody linguistic distinctions widely currently observed. Probably most arrangements called "schools-within-schools" instead represent "mini-schools," according to the terminology proposed here. Some of the struggles in Philadelphia have in effect been over whether "charters" will be "mini-schools" or even "houses," or whether they will be "schools-within-schools." New York is the only place that is launching "small schools" of the sort described here, although in effect they emerged in Toronto several decades ago as a result of surplus space. (Raywid, 1990b)

As can be seen, the four types represent different degrees of separateness and autonomy. The selection of one type or another may reflect different degrees of commitment to change, as well as differing levels of departure sought -- e.g., they may reflect a commitment to school improvement in preference to school transformation, or to reform instead of restructuring. The several types also reflect different levels of stability and likely durability -- since a school-within-a-school is a formally established body authorized by a school board and thus has a stronger potential for surviving personnel changes (Kirst & Meister, 1985), while a mini-school is the creature of the principal and can be terminated with a change in principals or a shift in favor.

It must also be underscored that these four are ideal types and that programs are likely only to approximate one or another of the four. House plans can vary from one-year programs (most typically a ninth-grade with a transitional focus) where students take most of their courses outside the house, all the way to multi-year units that stand as objects of strong affiliation for their students. This situation is less frequent, however, than its opposite, wherein instead of the distinct and entirely

separate programs they *can* be, schools-within-schools become extensively under-implemented units departing minimally from the rest of the school. House plans usually operate under conditions and/or restrictions -- in terms of both authorization and support -- that bar them from program development, and hence from the generation of teacher consensus or close collegial interaction.

Moreover, the strength or weakness of a particular house plan or mini-school or school-within-a-school -- i.e., its fidelity to its particular type -- may well vary over the years with personnel changes. If teachers are replaced on a seniority entitlement basis (more likely in a house or mini-school plan than in a school-within-a-school), newly assigned teachers may turn out to be unsympathetic and minimal implementors. Similarly, the commitment of a new building principal may differ from that of his or her predecessor. And a new superintendent may either terminate or intensify a subunit policy.

Nevertheless, despite variations and vicissitudes, the four types of downsized units we have identified tend to differ as to structure, organizational practice, and program. If we start with a list of features often associated with restructuring (see, e.g., Newmann, 1991 and Lee & Smith, 1994), some systematic differences among the four types emerge in each of these three fundamental connections.

[Put Figure 1 about here.]

There is not enough evidence to attempt quantifying the differences or ranking the importance of particular features. But the profiles of the several types of units do suggest a progression among the four -- marked by differing degrees of departure from conventional arrangements and practice, in the direction of the small school ideal.

OUTCOMES ASSOCIATED WITH SCHOOL DOWNSIZING

Student Impacts

The impacts of downsizing efforts will be examined in several contexts. First, we shall review the effects on students that investigations of various sorts have attributed to subschools and subunits. Then it will be asked to what extent these units

accomplish the structural and organizational reform of schools: to what extent downsizing brings separateness, autonomy, and distinctiveness -- three qualities said to be of practical significance -- and to what extent it brings about the school transformation which is currently a major purpose for undertaking it.

It must be noted that any such analyses are limited by the nature and extent of the available evidence. There are a number of case studies and evaluations of individual house plans, mini-schools, and schools-within-schools (e.g., Corcoran, 1989 ; Fouts, 1994; Morriseau, 1975; Moffett, 1981; Neufeld, 1993; Robinson-Lewis, 1991; Greenleaf, 1995). There are relatively few inquiries involving substantial numbers of subunits in multiple schools, but there are some (e.g., Crain, Heebner & Si, 1992; McCabe & Oxley, 1989; McMullan, Sipe & Wolf, 1994; Oxley & McCabe, 1990). Moreover, some of the studies offering quantitative and comparative analysis do not focus on the organizational structure these subunits represent, but on something else -- e.g., on the program of the schools-within-schools examined, as in the case of the several studies of California's Peninsula Academies (e.g., Dayton et al., 1987) and New York's career magnets (Crain, Heebner & Si, 1992) or on the alternative school nature of the programs investigated (Foley & McConnaughy, 1982), or on their magnet school status (Musumeci & Szczypkowski, 1991). Only one study could be located that made any attempt to separate the effects of structure from those of program in a subunit. (Charters, Carlson & Packard, 1986) Nor do most studies relevant to this one sufficiently permit fully distinguishing the several different types we have established. These limitations restrict the conclusions that can be drawn about subunits or subschools, but some tendencies nevertheless appear evident.

A school's ongoing activities can be divided into two sorts, instrumental and expressive. (Stockard & Mayberry, 1985) The instrumental activities directly address learning goals, while the expressive activities pertain to the school's socio-emotional atmosphere and the responses and motivations which that generates. An overwhelming proportion of the studies examining subunit arrangements suggest that when implemented they enhance the school's expressive activities. These in turn have a positive effect on attendance rates, behavior, students' school continuation, their satisfaction with school, and sometimes on their self-esteem.

Thus, a number of studies of the subunit arrangement report favorable

comparisons and/or improvements in attendance rates (Tompkins, 1988; Fouts, 1994; Corcoran, 1989; Aschbacher, 1991; Gordon, 1992) -- sometimes "dramatic improvements." (McMullan, Sipe & Wolf, 1994; Ramsey, Henson & Hula, 1967) Many link lowered dropout rates to the downsized arrangement. (D'Amico & Adelman, 1986; Dayton et al., 1987; Gordon, 1992) Reports of lowered suspension and disciplinary referral rates (Fouts, 1994) are common. Where inquiries have investigated the question, the self-concepts of students in a downsized program appear to be more positive. (Robinson-Lewis, 1991) Studies also report higher satisfaction rates with the subunits on the part of students (Fouts, 1994; Gordon, 1992) , and a stronger, more positive sense of affiliation with school. (Greenleaf, 1995) Teacher response appears parallel, displaying more positive satisfactions and enhanced morale. (Fouts, 1994; Robinson-Lewis, 1991)

There are, moreover, reports of attitude change which testify even more broadly to the enhancement of the downsized school's general impact on students. The smaller scale makes possible a communal organization in lieu of the formality and rigidities of bureaucratic organization and yields conditions permitting the development of community. (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988; Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1993). These appear crucial contributants to stronger school influence on students. (Grant, 1988) One investigator reports, for instance, that "creating real learning communities for young people ... increased their social commitment to one another and to their teachers, thereby increasing their personal investments in school." (Greenleaf, 1995: 46) She also reports that "embedding community ... increased student investment and led to an emergence of civic thinking and civic commitment that moved beyond the learning community and beyond the walls of the school." (Greenleaf, 1995: 46)

Until recently, the record as to the effects of downsizing on the school's expressive activities and their consequences (attendance, behavior, etc.) has been clearer and stronger than the links to what Stockard and Mayberry (1985) called instrumental activities. There have been findings of enhanced performance among students in subschools, and increased academic productivity on the part of such units. (Crain, Heebner, & Si, 1992) There have also been studies which show students in such units outperforming comparison groups in comprehensive high schools with respect to percent passing and credits earned (McMullan, Sipe & Wolf, 1994; Crain,

Heebner & Si, 1992), and showing youngsters outdoing their own prior performance after entering downsized units. (Robinson-Lewis, 1991) But there has also been an occasional investigation showing no significant differences (Jokiel & Starkey, 1972), or moderate or mixed gains (Morriseau, 1975) and tradeoffs, as in the case of one investigator who found that participation in a school-within-a-school didn't result in higher grades and "in fact, may have resulted in a slight decline. However, ... students did enhance their writing ability substantially." (Fouts,1994: 14)

In Philadelphia, however, in comparing charters students with students not enrolled in charters, investigators concluded:

> On all indicators, ninth-grade charter students outperform their non-chartered peers by a statistically significant amount.... [They]... have higher attendance, higher rates of passing major subjects, are more likely to earn enough credits for advancement and were less likely to have dropped out during the school year... The differences between the two groups are quite substantial, ranging from 11 to 15 percentage points across nine distinct indicators of academic performance. (McMullan, Sipe & Wolf, 1994: 37-38)

Yet it is not an automatic consequence, and not all downsized units succeed at the student identification-building thought pivotal. In Philadelphia, it was reported that only 54% of the previous year's ninth graders returned the following year to the charter of which they had been part. Higher return rates for some of the longest established charters suggested, however, that the voluntary departures were more characteristic of the more recent and only partially implemented ones -- to which youngsters in some cases had simply been assigned with no choice. (McMullan, Sipe & Wolf, 1994)

Evidence to the effect that the more extensive the implementation the greater the benefits comes from studies of New York City's house plan (Oxley & McCabe, 1990) and of its career magnet schools. Arrangements where magnet students are separated, taking their classes only with fellow magnet students, tend to have lower entering dropout rates in the junior high-to-high school transition than do programs which fail to maintain separate classes for magnet students. (Crain, Heebner & Si, 1992) This study also found that in the more extensively implemented programs, average readers improved their reading ability at more than double the rate of

students enrolled in comprehensive high schools. The authors speculate that these benefits may be due to fuller curricular implementation rather than to organizational differences. But the evidence they present is equally supportive of structural differences as the explanation.

Even clearer evidence regarding the effects of fuller versus partial implementation comes from Philadelphia. Evaluators there pursued two sets of outcomes, using the number of classes a student takes within the program as a surrogate for the extent of charter implementation. (The measure leaves it unclear whether in individual cases the problem of fewer than three classes in the charter is due to an insufficiently developed charter or to scheduling failures that assign students outside their charter. For our purposes, however, it makes no difference, since the result is less than full charter experience for the individual.) They found two quite different patterns for students who took as many as three of their courses within the charter and for those who did not.

> we...observed a persistent, net effect of charter participation on academic performance. Further, when we used a stricter definition of charter participation (taking three or more courses in the home charter) we found an even stronger net effect on student performance.

A study of New York's alternative schools suggests an explanation for the toll exacted by partial implementation of one sort -- that which would focus solely on either structural or programmatic change. It does so by accounting for the success of the alternatives in terms of their wedding of organizational to programmatic factors:

> At the heart of the matter is the interrelationship between climate and academic programming... The strengths of the schools are their well-focused academic programs and their capacity to engage students and teachers in a dialogue that reaches beyond the formality and rigidity of roles into the reality of individual lives; in other words, to foster creative human relationships. (Foley & McConnaughy,1982: ii; Foley & Crull, 1984: 53)

These investigators further linked structure, climate, and program by identifying extended roles and diversified responsibilities for teachers, choice or voluntary affiliation for students, small school size, the collaborative development of curriculum

by teachers, and flexibility as the more specific factors in determining success. (Foley & Crull, 1984; Foley & McConnaughy, 1982) To the extent that they are correct in suggesting that it is the *combination* which is the explanation, success is dependent on cultural change as well as structural, on organizational change as well as programmatic. Thus, partial implementation efforts -- efforts that neglect any of these broad components -- may severely compromise prospective impact.

Impacts on Schools

But just how extensive must the implementation of each component be? To what extent must a prospectively successful downsizing effort pursue both organizational and programmatic change? Just how many of the features of houses or charters must be adopted in order to make success likely? The benefits sought by downsizing efforts appear contingent upon the ability of the subunits or subschools to establish a collective identity, projecting clear, identifiable boundaries and displaying perceptible differences -- palpable to students -- from whatever lies beyond those boundaries, a host school or other subschools. This in turn appears to be a matter of the degree of separateness, autonomy, and distinctiveness they manage to achieve.

The separateness seems necessary to the conduct of expressive activities -- or to maintaining a distinct and identifiable subschool climate and culture. In one large school, for instance, that had been divided into three extensively independent subschools, constant pressure from the principal for the acceptance of schoolwide behavioral expectations, and for the sharing of key ceremonies and rituals, all but eliminated the distance from a host school requisite to a separate identity. (Raywid, 1996) "Separateness" is both literal and metaphoric. It is a matter of physical space -- a group of contiguous rooms set off in some perceptible way from the rest of the building -- e.g., by doors or locations in their own wings of the building or on different floors. It is also a matter of 'psychic distance' consisting of the freedom to pursue a set of values differing from those of the host school (be they related to projecting a corporate atmosphere, or in making the arts all-pervasive, or in emphasizing the obligation to serve one's fellow creatures). It is also the distance to pursue a decorum (such as an interactional style) and a set of procedures (such as the scheduling of classes) which differ from those of the host school.

Autonomy is a matter of the authority to make at least some of the decisions determinative of an education: what goals will be pursued, what priorities observed, how staff and other resources shall be deployed, the organization and presentation of the curriculum, what is expected of students, the way progress shall be assessed. No school's autonomy is total. But unless subunits are granted some degree of freedom in determining these matters for themselves, they will find it almost impossible to establish a distinct identity. Under today's circumstances, the autonomy may have to be obtained from multiple levels and sources -- e.g., in the form of waivers or exemptions from state curricular mandates and tests, from district regulations, from contract appointment procedures, and from building regularities.

Of particular import is the locus of control of whatever autonomy is relegated to the building: Does that reside with the subunit? Is it divided somehow between host school and subunit? Or is it delegated at the pleasure of the principal? These represent three different levels of autonomy for the subschool or unit, those ordinarily distinguishing independent small schools from mini-schools or houses.

The separateness and autonomy appear necessary, though not sufficient, to produce distinctiveness -- by enabling the school to become the product of the staff who operate it, of their interests and talents and convictions, and of their personally-devised efforts to respond to their particular student population. Without real differences from one subschool to another, and the distinctiveness that ensues, these units will not become points of affiliation and identification on the part of students. With what is there to identify?

Yet distinctiveness is a quality that traditional schools have not sought and which remains foreign to many teachers. As a result, it is a quality that is often elusive in subunits teachers have been asked to create -- and even in some of those created by volunteers. (See, e.g., Raywid, 1995.) In what ways are they to differ? Is it sufficient to establish distinctiveness to adopt a particular reading program, or to move toward small group instruction and cooperative learning, or to adopt a curricular theme such as science or the humanities? Probably not. In the first place, distinctiveness must be a matter of *qualities* as well as *elements* so that a particular school style or personality is cultivated -- such as the prominence of humor and/or the featuring of collaboration. Programmatically, subschool distinctiveness could be defeated were

several of the downsized units in a building to adopt a Whole Language orientation, or all to emphasize cooperative learning. It is not that each subschool or unit must have a full program that is totally unique and different from all others. That seems unlikely. And it is not that each aspect of a subunit's program has to be locally invented and home-grown. But unless each school personalizes itself in the sense that it clearly bears the stamp of its particular teachers, then it is unlikely to attain the needed distinctiveness.

To attract students and become the objects of a sense of affiliation, the units need to reflect the same sort of individuality and distinctiveness that people do. All human beings have essentially the same components, perhaps, but they are differently assembled and prioritized, and in different amounts -- which is what makes one individual differ from another as to appearance, personality, salient characteristics, talents, and strengths. Distinctive schools represent similar totalities or unique assemblages of attributes.

The four types of downsized units we have identified differ as to the degree of autonomy, separateness, and distinctiveness they reflect. Figure 2 below shows some of these differences in relation to the particular components which yield these qualities.

[insert Figure 2 here.]

Schools which have achieved the qualities of separateness, autonomy, and distinctiveness are likely to be restructured schools in the terms that Lee and Smith define them: they are likely to have "moved away from the bureaucratic toward a more organic form," (1994: 11) and become "a more communally organized school." (It is possible, of course, to try to replicate a full bureaucracy under downsized circumstances, but it becomes far more difficult to do, and thus bureaucracy is unlikely to thrive in subschools.) But it can also be asked whether downsizing is likely to achieve the rest of the restructuring agenda. The aims of school restructuring are, after all, more extensive than converting schools to communal organizations. According to the National Center on the Organization and Restructuring of Schools (Newmann, 1991), these aims, as set by restructurers, are: authentic student achievement;

equity; empowerment; the establishment of communities of learning; reflective dialogue; and accountability. Is downsizing an effective strategy for pursuing such ends? There is positive related evidence, but it is far from conclusive.

As we have seen, there is evidence from both qualitative and quantitative research to the effect that reducing school size is an important move in terms of both direct and indirect effects. It makes a school's students more visible, more needed, and better known to the teaching staff. As noted above, it also makes possible a communal form of organization instead of a bureaucratic one -- a change increasingly recognized as pivotal to school enhancement. (Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1994; Lee & Smith, 1994) It appears, then, that downsizing efforts can have both intrinsic and instrumental value, whether or not they are the necessary prerequisite to other reforms as some have asserted. (e.g., Oxley, 1989)

It is clear, however, that not all downsizing attempts have changed much. There have been instances of failure and of minimal gain. For instance, one effort bringing disappointing returns was a school-within-a-school in which the structure failed to reflect the concept sufficiently to claim the benefits associated with it. (Raywid, 1990a) The program was targeted for at-risk students and given its own separate, well-defined space and student complement. But instead of pursuing extended teacher roles in the interests of fuller student-teacher relationships, a social worker was hired to meet with the students regularly. Further undermining the possibility of expanded adult/student relationships, only one teacher was assigned fulltime to the program, with the rest of those involved teaching just one course there (and some departments rotating the assignment among their members annually). Only one course reflected a cross-disciplinary organization of content or any other sort of instructional innovation. Under circumstances of such piecemeal and partial implementation of the school-within-a-school concept, there were minimal improvements in student performance and virtually no gains as to authentic achievement, equity, empowerment, the establishment of a learning community, the stimulation of reflective dialogue, or accountability.

We have earlier alluded to another school which never managed to represent a restructured enterprise. It was one marked by ambivalence with respect to whether its three schools-within-schools would be essentially separate and autonomous as

planned, or whether they were to be three programs operated by a single parent school. (Raywid, 1996) A lot of energy on both sides went into a tug of war, and the struggle evidently exhausted the major actors. After two contentious years the directors of the two most promising schools-within-schools resigned, along with their core staff, and on the last day of the school year the principal resigned as well. In this case, although the design had been explicit in assigning responsibilities and prerogatives, implementing officials failed to follow it, and the schools-within-schools were denied control of their own operations at the same time that they were being pressed in various ways to remain an integral part of a unified school.

Perhaps the most extensively documented report of the failure of downsizing efforts to change very much comes from the study of the Annie Casey Foundation's "New Futures" project. (Wehlage, Smith & Lipman, 1992; Lipman, 1995) The Foundation sought to improve the life chances of disadvantaged youth in four cities, in part through school transformation. In two of the four, efforts centered on a teaming or cluster arrangement with the features typically associated with downsizing efforts (e.g., clustering of students and teachers, advisories, meeting time for teachers). In the third city of the four, academies were adopted. But after three years, and despite these changes in school organization, evaluators found that restructuring had not even begun.

Instead, the changes had occurred as incremental supplements or add-on's to existing arrangements, rather than as replacements of them. Thus adult/student relationships had not changed and remained negative. The reason why restructuring had not occurred, the evaluators concluded, was that staff failed to see it as necessary. They continued to assume that the problem lay with the students and thus called for solutions to individual students' personal difficulties, rather than for changes in the school. Without the necessary changes in school culture, the environment made possible by the new structures could not develop. These schools simply never reached the point where "the dialogue for change broadened beyond the deficits and transgressions of individual students." (Zane, 1994: 126) The new structures could provide the opportunities but cultural change was necessary before they could be realized.

Although evidence to date is limited in extent and detail, it appears that many of

the literature's 'bad news' reports are associated with one or another of the three shortcomings illustrated in these examples: insufficient faithfulness to the small school concept -- either in the design or in the implementation; insufficient autonomy and separateness of the subunit or -school; or the failure of cultural change to accompany structural. On the other hand, where these three conditions have been met, the record is far more positive. The school's instrumental, as well as its expressive activities are positively affected, and improved attendance, effort, and achievement have followed.

It is too soon for much evidence involving numbers. A first-year external evaluation of 12 of the initial batch of small schools growing out of New York's initiative (Office of Educational Research, 1994) concluded that they have managed to develop their own unique cultures; that their curricula were developing around a theme or focus; that they displayed a tendency toward collaborative school governance and administration; and that many of them were working in unusual collaborations with organizations and agencies outside the school. Given the values defining restructuring (see pages 30-31 above), such findings would indicate that restructuring is the path these schools have chosen. They contrast sharply with the New Futures findings cited above where adoptions failed to add up to restructuring.

Michelle Fine's estimate as of 1994 was that in most of Philadelphia's charters, transformation was still in process. "A few," she wrote, "perhaps 10% to 15%, are exceptional. Most are still mediocre...." (1994: 13) Some of the outstanding examples have already been identified, as analysts describe Crossroads at Gratz High School, and William Penn High School's House of Masterminds (Oxley, 1993; 1995) in Philadelphia, and COMETS at Harper High School in Chicago. (Klonsky, forthcoming) In New York, studies of the Urban Academy (Ancess, 1995a; Raywid, 1994), and of International High School (Bush, 1993), suggest that these are schools which have accomplished a great deal of the restructuring agenda. As one of the newer schools established as part of the small schools initiative, the School for the Physical City appears also to reflect the defining themes and values (Mosle, 1995), as does Vanguard. (Dillon, 1995) This is without mentioning Central Park East Secondary School (CPESS), arguably by now the nation's most famous high school and certainly its most well-known small school. CPESS is not the only successful small school, but by virtue of its relatively senior status in the movement (dating from 1985), as well as

its quality, it has been the most extensively documented and most often discussed of the new genre. There is considerable evidence in classroom materials distributed by the school, in analysts' descriptions, and in film, that restructuring has been accomplished here: teacher and student roles have been transformed and the two groups interact quite differently than in traditional schools; school governance is quite different, with teachers collectively deciding most central issues; all students are pursuing the same demanding curriculum; the daily schedule is different; the student assessment system is different; and teachers continually examine and modify their practice together.

While the negative examples confirm that downsizing does not guarantee restructuring will ensue, the positive cases testify to potentialities now documented as otherwise difficult to generate. As Lee and Smith concluded (1994: 26), "one discouraging finding is ... restructuring ... is quite rare in American secondary schools." Downsizing appears one potentially promising way of pursuing it. (See, for example, the literature testifying to the minimal transformative effects of site-based management on schools.) Partly in the wake of the Annenberg grants stimulating creation of small schools and requiring careful evaluation, developments in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and elsewhere should soon be yielding more explicit and extensive evidence on the restructuring potential and success requisites of these efforts.

HESITATIONS AND RESERVATIONS

As warned at the outset, Coalition of Essential Schools researchers have been highly critical of schools-within-schools, finding them divisive and peace-threatening. (Muncey & McQuillan, 1991) A report on one Coalition school identified several sources of organizational tension in the arrangement, asserting that it "*challenge[d] the status quo of the mainstream high school*," "*set up divisions between ...[SWAS]... and mainstream teachers*," introduced "*practices ... viewed ... counter to those supported in the mainstream*," yielded "*allegations that ...[SWAS]... teachers get favored treatment and undeserved visibility*," produced isolation of the SWAS faculty, and made it "*very difficult to schedule and staff the ...[SWAS]... program ... while meeting the needs of the mainstream program.*" (Neufeld, 1993: 72-80. Emphases in the original.)

As the list suggests, the tensions are associated with a particular context: They

presuppose the continuance of a mainstream program and of a single school-within-a school paralleling it. Should more schools-within-schools be permitted -- or a building converted to multiple small schools instead of having a mainstream -- it remains to be seen whether such difficulties would continue (or, for that matter, whether others might replace them).

The criticisms and reservations applying to downsizing that have emanated from Coalition and other sources suggest that the doubts usually reduce to one or more of the following four: whether small schools are prohibitively expensive; whether subunits inevitably introduce conflict and dissension; whether they can resist grouping students as to ability and achievement; and/or whether the idea doesn't contravene key lessons of the Effective Schools movement.

Costs

There are two kinds of costs associated with the new small schools -- or in fact, with the establishment of any new schools: start-up costs and operating costs. The small schools have a distinct advantage in relation to large ones with respect to start-up costs. Since they can fit into or take over existing structures, they may require only renovations expenditures rather than construction costs.

This is not to underestimate other sorts of start-up costs, however, which can be considerable for any substantial change effort. Louis and Miles (1990) have estimated that an annual supplement of up to $100,000 per year is needed for the first several years by any existing school undertaking substantial change -- to cover the expenses associated with "planning, developing, training, monitoring, and evaluation," and with space, equipment, and/or materials. (1990: 243) The mean annual supplement expended by the five schools they studied was $212,000 (with the range extending from $7,000 to $539,000). None of the five that Louis and Miles studied, and whose experience undergirded their estimates, undertook the creation of subschools. Thus, the $100,000 these authors recommended can be used as a rough basis for comparisons regarding the sustenance of substantial change efforts as opposed to start-up costs for new small schools-within-schools. It would appear that the bill for the 11 new Coalition Campus Schools launched by the Center for Collaborative Education as a part of New York City's small schools initiative will be roughly

commensurate with that figure. Peter Robertson reports (1995) that the start-up costs for the 11 schools, including the costs for the planning year prior to opening, average a total of $500,000 per school. This would mean an average of $125,000 per year for the first three years plus the planning year -- considerably lower than the annual $212,000 mean of the Louis and Miles schools seeking substantial change.

It is worth noting that in both sets of cases cited here -- those studied by Louis and Miles, and the Coalition Campus Schools -- a substantial portion of the start-up funds came from external sources, rather than from the local district. In the case of the Coalition Campus Schools, more than half of the start-up monies extended to each have come from grants. (Robertson, 1995)

Standard operating costs beyond the start-up period are a separate matter. These are usually computed simply by dividing the total spent by the number of students enrolled, to arrive at the cost per student. But as analysts are pointing out, that may not be the most appropriate measure. (Robertson, 1995) If cost-effectiveness judgments are based instead upon the figure reached by dividing the dollars spent by the number of students who manage to *graduate*, the results are entirely different. It seems a reasonable formula: not the number a high school attempts to deal with, but the number with which it manages to succeed. With the adjusted base, comprehensive high school costs soar. A school that graduates only 50% of its students -- not uncommon in urban high schools -- thereby doubles its costs per graduate. On such a basis, even with higher expenditures, small schools would prove far less expensive to operate than large ones.

However, evidence to date suggests that the small schools do not require higher expenditures. New York City's Public Education Association (PEA) has argued that not only are construction costs more affordable for small schools than for larger ones (1992b), but operating costs as well render smaller schools more cost-effective. (1992a) PEA has shown that instead of the long assumed "economies of scale" favoring large schools, they actually operate with diseconomies or penalties of scale. Comparing costs in small New York alternative schools with those of comprehensive high schools, the Association's analysis showed the proportion of resources needed in a large school for supervision, clerical support, and security that are simply unnecessary in small schools. The PEA study demonstrated that rather than a

proportionately larger expenditure for such positions (let alone a proportionately smaller expenditure, as the argument for scale would have it), the large school created a disproportionate need for these positions. Given this, the costs added by small school administrative needs are minimal, and the administrative resources needed for 2250 students could be handled for very little more in three separate schools of 750 than in one for all 2250.

The economies of small schools are seen to lie in their ability to allocate resources differently. They have need for less supervisory personnel (and hence for the clerical support needed to sustain them), and for fewer specialized services such as guidance counselor, librarian, aide. Thus, more of their funding can be targeted directly for teachers and classroom use. What is more, the small schools can use staff more effectively, so that a teacher may spend a greater proportion of his/her time dealing directly with students than in a large school, and the average amount of per-student teacher time available is greater in the small school. (Robertson, 1995)

To date, there have been few investigations providing more direct and extensive empirical warrant for the claim that small schools -- including schools-within-schools -- cost no more than large ones. There have been analytic studies such as those of the Public Education Association (1992a; 1992b) adducing reasons why smaller units are less costly in principle than larger ones. And there have also been surveys of schools-within-schools where respondents have reported that the operating expenses of their programs were equal to or less than those of the host school. (e.g., Moffett, 1981) But to date a combination of differences in accounting procedures, restrictive disclosure policies, and the absence of illuminating measures have limited the sorts of comparative costs studies undertaken.

Divisiveness

Another reservation expressed about schools-within-schools is that they create interpersonal difficulties within a school. There is no question that the new relationships and alignments entailed in the establishment of subunits serve to distance prior relationships and, to the extent that they succeed, they replace old alignments. Moreover, the more numerous and intensive the new connections -- as in schools-within-schools probably, rather than in house plans -- the greater the

interruption of previous associations. This is both asset and liability. It is, after all what school restructuring is about -- with one of its most succinct definitions being the creation of "new rules, roles, and *relationships* " (Brandt, 1993. Emphasis added.) Having people interact within different groups and patterns is thought important to changing school culture. It is thought necessary to interrupting the regularities that defined the school prior to the change effort. (Sarason, 1971) Thus, the establishment of new relationships is an important contribution to change.

But the generation of the new associations, and the attenuation of old ones, is frequently a cause of tension. In the elementary school it is typically the grade-level connections that are loosened, since grade-level is the usual organizational pattern there, if any subdivisions exist. At the secondary level it is usually departmental connections that are supplemented or replaced. Teachers in schools that have adopted subunits often express a sense of loss in this regard. (Little, 1995; Raywid, 1995a) Moreover, where the subunits are strong enough to focus student and teacher commitment -- usually a primary intent of such efforts -- this drains concern for and commitment to the school as a whole. Thus, the schools-within-schools arrangement sometimes brings concern over the tension between an all-school identification and a subunit identification. (Raywid, 1996) At the very least, diminished communication is to be expected, and that alone can yield tensions.

This concern is compounded by the fact that rivalries can appear among the subunits, and competition for resources (teachers, space, funding). The new subunits also contend with the old and introduce new power relationships vis-a-vis the old -- most notably with respect to departments, but also in relation to units representing categoricals and special functions. By virtue of the new *roles* and *relationships* they introduce, they may also bring contention between the leaders of the new units and the officials associated with the old.

As earlier suggested, Coalition of Essential Schools ethnographers have concluded that the school-within-a-school arrangement is divisive by nature. (Muncey & McQuillan, 1991). It is not clear that subschools would introduce sharper divisions and more isolation than departments have meant for the high school (Siskin, 1994; Hargreaves & Macmillan, 1995), or that grade-level organization has meant for large elementary schools. It may be that the relative amicability among existing subunits is

due not to their less contentious nature but rather to the fact that relative status and power have long since been established among them. Nevertheless, the Coalition warns, "*try to avoid using the SWAS entry point into change if at all possible.*" (Muncey, 1994: 169. Emphasis in the original) Muncey and McQuillan identify five "central tensions" evident in their case studies of Coalition schools-within-schools (1991: 85-86):

> allegations of favored treatment; isolation of SWAS faculty from larger school faculty; the perceived need to appear successful; the problematic nature of expansion due to a lack of consensus...; and the problematic nature of expansion due to scheduling and space constraints.

Only the first three of these tensions are pertinent here, because the last two stem from circumstances unique to the Coalition: its use of schools-within-schools as a beginning and prospectively temporary arrangement, hoping eventually to enroll the entire school. Elsewhere, by contrast, the school-within-a-school plan is not projected as a temporary but as a standing arrangement wherein buildings will house multiple subschools.

The extent to which the Muncey-McQuillan conclusions, and those of other Coalition investigators, are unique to Coalition circumstances remains uncertain: in no case where the Coalition program has been introduced as a school-within-a-school has that been the permanent plan. In all such cases, the subunit is actually functioning as a pilot, with the expectation that it will take over or become an imposed model for the rest of the school. (Although the Coalition is clear in wanting consensual support for the alliance from a school's staff, a lot of teachers have had prior experience with imposed consensuses and mandates substituted in their stead. Related concerns are sometimes part of their response to Coalition schools-within-schools.) (Raywid & Baker, 1993) In light of such prospects, and given the fact that such pilots have often included all who were positively disposed to begin with, substantial negativism might be anticipated to develop outside the program. Given the interconnectedness of school operation, the Coalition pilot usually has some impact on the parent school -- for example, on schedule, or the ability to offer electives (Raywid & Baker, 1993) -- and it is not surprising that resentments grow. It remains uncertain, however, whether

these negatives accrue largely from the pilot status of the school-within-a-school, or from its very existence, as Coalition researchers have tended to conclude. Still another possibility is, as Michelle Fine insists, that a single school-within-a-school is bound to raise difficulties that multiple such units would not.

Although schools-within-schools have elsewhere been proposed as a means of minimizing conflict among people who see education in very different ways, undoubtedly their introduction in a school is likely to generate conflict. Indeed, it is becoming apparent that it is unlikely that restructuring efforts of *any* sort can occur without conflict. (Lieberman, 1995) As Lieberman, Darling-Hammond and Zuckerman flatly assert, "Conflict is a necessary part of change." (1991: ix) The reason, they explain, is that change efforts "allow (and to be successful, *require*) previously hidden problems, issues, and disagreements to surface." Thus, as Carl Glickman adds, "*the more an empowered school works collectively, the more individual differences and tensions among the staff members become obvious.*" (Glickman, 1990: 71. Emphasis in the original.) But even more traditional, less ambitious reform efforts -- e.g., changes in state curricular requirements -- also cause conflict, even generating schisms in some high school departments. (Talbert, 1995) So it may be that school improvement -- i.e., change -- and conflict avoidance are purposes that cannot both be served simultaneously.

Inequitable Grouping

Some are wary that subschools will be used as mechanism and rationale for perpetuating ability grouping and the exclusion of special needs students. The risk stems from the fact that any attempt to set up heterogeneously grouped subunits confronts existing special programs, specialized courses, and academic tracks. (Oxley, 1993) Moreover, "differentiated educational programs," says Diana Oxley, "pose the real danger that students will continue to be held to different standards, as is currently the case in different academic tracks and special needs programs." (1994: 522) And if the subunits are to be autonomous and themed, then they will inevitably be differentiated. (And *unless* they are autonomous and themed, they are unlikely to fulfill the purposes to which such units are created: to become the locus of student and teacher identification in the interests of enhancing the commitment and performance of

both.) Thus the challenge is how to differentiate without tracking.

Developments in both New York and Philadelphia attest to the risks and temptations involved. Oxley reports (1989: 51) that after the house plan mandate, "dropout prevention *programs* became, overnight, dropout prevention *houses*!" The lure is understandable, given the assumption that special treatments are necessary, and given the prohibition against co-mingling of funds as stipulated by many categorical programs. But it is not only categorical programs that perpetuate inequitable grouping arrangements. As earlier suggested, some adopt downsizing arrangements while maintaining previous ability and achievement grouping. New York's house plan arrangement, like others, was typically an overlay superimposed on a pre-existing departmental structure with tracked class assignments. Under such circumstances, the effect was to make even more pronounced the separation of students at different ability and performance levels.

Even when homogeneous grouping is rejected, themed schools-within-schools -- an arrangement recommended by the hope of fashioning units with which students will identify -- present another more subtle challenge. As Oxley reported (1989: 51), "if ... a school subdivides into houses with themes of 'English,' 'Science,' 'Sports,' 'Performing Arts,' and 'Business,' the strongest students will troup toward the academic themes, and the weaker students to the others." Such a situation is not inevitable in establishing a theme or focus, however, and it can be prevented. (Raywid, 1994) But it is a challenge that often must be explicitly confronted if that is to happen.

Evaluators of Philadelphia's charters noted tendencies similar to those in New York, and designer Michelle Fine wrote in 1994, "[t]here are still some schools in which charters look a lot like tracks..." (1994: 18) There are several reasons. In the first place, in Philadelphia, pre-existing charter-like programs -- career academies, magnet schools, special college prep programs (called "Motivation") -- were simply converted to charters. Some of these had admission requirements which screen out low-achievers. There was also a tendency to convert existing dropout programs to charters. And when they were not so converted, there was a tendency to exclude at risk students altogether from the charter arrangement. The conversion plan explicitly recommended gradual change not starting with the most challenging students. But the

effect was that "special educaton students, over-age students and students repeating their current grade are less likely than students who do not share these risk factors to be assigned to charters at all..." (McMullan, Sipe & Wolf, 1994: 26) At least in some cases the reasons apparently involved a desire to avoid tracked charters and to quell the job-retention fears of specialized teachers. While there are some who would find such a situation acceptable, at least on a transitional basis, others would remind them that it is just such students who most need the downsized arrangement.

Effective Schools strategies

A broader set of reservations may be posed by the often-cited lessons of Effective Schools. The Effective Schools literature emphasizes at least two points that are challenged by the subunit and subschool plan. (Cohen, 1987) The first is the emphasis on total school or building coherence and the second is the Effective Schools stress on principal leadership. Subunits, in contrast -- either houses or mini-schools -- could impede school coherence. To the extent that houses or mini-schools succeed at the purpose of becoming the point of identification for students and staff, they have introduced a psychic distancing from the parent school. They have set up a departing and perhaps even a rival subculture. And if the units have separate instructional programs, it may be more difficult to sustain an all-school conception of achievement and other schoolwide expectations.

Such concerns are genuine, and any efforts to create subunits powerful enough to stimulate psychological identification are undoubtedly going to attenuate all-school ties and create tensions between subunit versus schoolwide affinity. Moreover, the practices that would build one or the other will conflict. For instance, in one elementary school it became a major issue whether pupils would share recess with other youngsters of the same grade-level, or with their school-within-a-school classmates. In a junior-senior high school with three schools-within-schools, there was a struggle over whether there should be three graduations or one.

Note, however, that such tension ceases when the school-within-a-school is acknowledged as a separate entity -- one school among several within a building. Under these circumstances there are not competing loyalties and rival claims on the individual, and a 'schoolwide' focus can be sustained -- actually, multiple schoolwide

foci -- within a single building. Such an arrangement may generate tensions, e.g. as to the sharing of common space, but these will not be of the variety that concern Effective Schools advocates.

The second set of reservations that such advocates sometimes bring to the schools-within-schools arrangement pertains to the preservation of the principalship role. House plans do not change the principal's role; but mini-schools and schools-within-schools do, and in several ways. Both expand teachers' roles and are consistent with notions of teacher empowerment. Teachers collectively assume responsibility for program design, scheduling, etc. Moreover, both arrangements are likely to have part-time teacher coordinators or directors who in effect assume the instructional leadership function which Effective Schools research assigns to the principal. Some principals with responsibility for mini-schools treat the coordinators of these as entry-level administrators to whom they have delegated responsibilities and assigned duties. Others view them as somewhat more autonomous teacher-led programs. There is more ambiguity in the mini-school leadership position than in the case of the school-within-a-school leader: the latter is a separate authority with powers and responsibilities assigned by the district. He or she functions independently of the principal and reports to an official outside the building. (Some New York City school buildings actually house both mini-schools and schools-within-schools -- which the principal must deal with quite differently.)

It seems clear that in neither mini-schools nor schools-within-schools is the principal charged with the instructional leadership which Effective Schools advocates bestow. Some view this as more realistic, particularly in large schools, and more conducive to the actual occurrence of instructional leadership -- which principals rarely assert in the comprehensive high school. (Siskin, 1994) There is no question, however, that the principal's role is redefined by these downsizing arrangements and the leadership function somewhat diminished. As teachers take over the direct or immediate leadership there is less need and less opportunity for principals to exert it. In a large building composed of several schools-within-schools, the principal's role has shifted considerably: It falls somewhere between that of building and facilities manager and that of district or regional superintendent with responsibility for several schools. As English and Hill have suggested, the model shifts from instructional to

entrepreneurial leader. (1990) Although the building manager role would permit the principal to function in one of the ways currently being recommended -- as facilitator -- and the superintendent role would provide opportunity for cross-school policymaking -- it is understandable that principals associations and bargaining agents may prove wary about such a change. Yet returning to Schlechty's succinct formulation of the nature of restructuring, "changing rules, *roles*, and relationships" (Brandt, 1993. Emphasis added) is exactly what it is about.

Other challenges will doubtless emerge as experience with subunits and subschools grows. Any arrangement, past or prospective, is likely to come with unwanted effects and it will be important to know what to anticipate and address. One emerging tension, for instance, may prove to be that between providing extended teacher roles, on the one hand -- which is fundamental to personalizing the experience of school for both staff and students -- and on the other hand, to being able to deal with what an evaluation called "the extremes of student behavior." (Office of Educational Research, 1994) Other prospective tensions and challenges are being brought to light by the growing literature on the current centrality of subject matter departments to the high school teacher's professional identification. (Siskin, 1994; Siskin & Little, 1995) But at present, a number of the tensions identified, and the reservations expressed about school downsizing arrangements attach to the need, as Barbara Neufeld expressed it, for "supporting the traditional while initiating the new" (1993: 74) -- i.e., for maintaining a mainstream while supporting one or more units operating outside it.

CONCLUSION

The evidence examined suggests that school downsizing efforts have been introduced to multiple purposes -- currently most prominently to enhance the commitment, performance, and development of teachers and students. As we have seen, a number of subunits, subschools, and small schools have been quite successful in accomplishing these purposes, bringing better attendance, more positive attitudes toward school, greater academic productivity, and enhanced satisfactions with school. Such success depends in large part on the extent to which the small schools concept has been adopted in principle and implemented. Those units

designed so as to permit them to become separate, autonomous, distinctive entities have a much better chance than those which have not been.

We have also seen enough of downsizing to become aware that it is not the fail-safe magic bullet which reform seekers continue to hope for. It cannot guarantee that school transformation will unfold or that marvelous teacher and student performance will ensue. Organizational restructuring cannot assure that instructional change will follow. It cannot even promise that the collective identity necessary to strong individual identification will emerge. (As one disappointed teacher put it, "A house is not necessarily a home." Talbert, 1995: 35) Restructuring, in the first place, consists of changes difficult to accomplish on the only sort of scale that will make a difference. Restructuring -- as opposed to creating a new small school -- keeps teachers busy at two jobs simultaneously. They must operate the old system while installing the new. To ask them to restructure their schools "is a bit like asking people to change a tire while driving the car. To make matters even more difficult, we're told that it's not enough to change one, all four need to be replaced, not to mention the steering mechanism, the suspension system, the fuel we use, and the interior design...." (Cook & Meier, 1990: 1) But even that is not really all they have to contend with. Everything must be accomplished within an unstable context that also keeps changing:

> Furthermore, the passengers keep changing and some of them insist on the right to share the driving. And some seem to think they should be able to get out at a moment's notice, but the driver is ordered to keep going - stops are discouraged and speed is essential. Amidst all this, drivers are still expected to follow the rules of the road, although many are contradictory and almost all were written for the old model car the driver is supposed to be dismantling. Where is it going? No one seems quite sure although they are expected to get there right away. The driver appealed a few times to those in charge, but there's just been a change of command and no one is yet able to answer the call.

The metaphor suggests the challenges that have led some to conclude that designing and launching a brand new school is preferable to trying to restructure an already existing one. A successful new small school may be easier and better assured than a new subunit in an existing school. Nevertheless, just as particular

challenges have attached to previous school reform efforts, this one is likely to breed its own. We have said little of the daily frustrations confronting the teachers who have launched small schools -- the elusiveness of stable, adequate space; the uncertainties of sufficient resources in a period of financial retrenchment; the concerns introduced by changing administrations. And undoubtedly, some of the problems are yet to surface and are not yet apparent. Others are already evident, including the demands the effort makes on teachers. One charter school teacher summed up her experience with the words, "'It's put a smile on my lips and bags under my eyes.'" (Fine, 1994: 8) It remains to be seen whether the job can be done without exacting heroic efforts -- and how many people will reach the point of being willing and able to undertake them. It is not yet clear whether multiple small schools must fill a building in order to permit the downsizing arrangement to work, so that there is no regular or 'host' school. Nor is it clear whether such an arrangement will breed less conflict among the resulting neighbor units within a building than have other arrangements.

On the other hand, what is clear is that reducing the size of schools can increase student participation, reduce dropout rates, enhance academic achievement, and enhance teacher efficacy. It is also apparent that downsizing stimulates the move toward personalized, 'communal' schools, which bring independent benefits with respect to enhancing student engagement and achievement. It seems similarly clear that under present conditions, school downsizing efforts may be necessary to restoring the conditions human beings need in order to thrive -- to function as engaged and committed agents in their own and others' education. Finally, it appears that downsizing may be necessary to making it possible for schools to effectively initiate the changes recognized essential to improvement. It provides no guarantee that these other changes will follow. But it appears a crucial step toward letting them begin.

ENDNOTES

[1] Accordingly, the literature cited in this paper is quite varied. Some of it consists of major studies conducted by external agencies and examining substantial numbers of cases (e.g., McCabe & Oxley, 1989; Oxley & McCabe, 1990; McMullan & Wolf, 1991; McMullan, Sipe & Wolf, 1994; Crain, Heebner & Si, 1992; Lee & Smith, 1994). Other works cited consist of single school studies done by external investigators (e.g., Aschbacher, 1991; Corcoran, 1989; Greenleaf, 1995; Raywid, 1995 and 1996), while others consist of in-district evaluations (e.g.,Robinson-Lewis, 1991) and yet others are single-school evaluations (e.g. Gordon, 1992). The variety is by design. While the result is to mix powerful and less substantial studies, a deliberate effort has been made to restrict the works cited to credible inquiries.

Figure I

Select Restructuring Features in the Several Types of Downsized Units

Structure

	Student Choice	Teacher Choice	Full Teacher Assignment	Full Student Assignment	Heterogeneous Units	Themed Units	Stable Units	Teacher Directors
Houses	✗	?	?	?✗	?	✗	?	✗
Mini-schools	✓	✓	✓	?✓	?✓	✓	✓	?
Schools-Within Schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Small Schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Organizational Practice

	Staff controls curriculum	Staff sets budget	Staff selects staff	Regular collegial meetings	Diffused staff roles	Shift to communal organization	Units replace depts.	Teaching de-privatized
Houses	✗	✗	✗	✗	?✗	?✗	✗	✗
Mini-schools	?	✗	✗	?	?✓	?✓	✓	?
Schools-Within Schools	?✓	?✓	?✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Small Schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Programmatic

	Discernible teaming	Cohesive curriculum	Cross-disciplinary curriculum	Theme suffuses classes	Flexible scheduling	Engagement emphasis	Advisories or 'family' groups
Houses	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	?	?
Mini-schools	?✓	?	✓	?	?	?	✓
Schools-Within Schools	✓	✓	✓	?✓	✓	✓	✓
Small Schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key:
✓ = Yes
✗ = No
? = Uncertain
?✓ = Probably yes
?✗ = Probably no

Figure II

Separateness, Autonomy and Distinctiveness Components as Found in the Four Types of Downsized Units

Separateness

	Exclusive assignment of students	Exclusive assignment of teachers	Unit vertically organized	Stable groups	Separate, contiguous space	Cross-disciplinary teams
Houses	?	?✗	?	?	✗	✗
Mini-schools	✓	?	?	?	✓	✓
Schools-Within Schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Small Schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Autonomy

	Separate schedule	Staff set curriculum	Staff set budget	Staff choose staff	Teachers schedule collaborative time
Houses	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Mini-schools	✗	?	✗	✗	?
Schools-Within Schools	✓	✓	?	?✓	✓
Small Schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Distinctiveness

	Staff set theme	Theme pervasiveness	Teacher affiliation by commitment	Student affiliation by choice	Flexible schedule	Advisories
Houses	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	?
Mini-schools	✓	?	✓	✓	?	✓
Schools-Within Schools	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Small Schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key:
✓ = Yes
✗ = No
? = Uncertain
?✓ = Probably yes
?✗ = Probably no

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